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INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS IMMEDIATE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 002113

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STATE FOR EAP, EAP/MTS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/18/2016

TAGS: PREL PGOV PTER BM RP

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S MAY 18 MEETING WITH FOREIGN SECRETARY ROMULO

Classified By: Ambassador Kristie A. Kenney
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶11. (U) This is an action message -- see para. 8.

¶12. (C) SUMMARY. Foreign Affairs Secretary Romulo intends to focus on Burma and regional counterterrorism when the Philippines takes the chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and is optimistic about peace prospects with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. He hopes to discuss these and other issues via telephone with Secretary Rice prior to his May 28 meetings with the Non-Aligned Movement. END SUMMARY.

¶13. (C) Foreign Affairs Secretary Alberto Romulo in a private May 18 breakfast with the Ambassador said he intends to use his potential June visit to Burma to push the road map for democracy. He also plans to put Burma and regional counterterrorism cooperation high on the agenda after the Philippines becomes chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in July. Romulo will be meeting with the Non-Aligned Movement on May 28 in Kuala Lumpur, and would like to make productive use of this forum to discuss these issues.

¶14. (C) Romulo expressed optimism over the GRP-Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) peace process. He said negotiations were moving in the right direction and hoped that USAID could provide additional assistance to the MILF in advance of a comprehensive peace agreement. Ambassador said the USG would look at ways to be helpful in the process.

¶15. (C) Romulo said President Arroyo's recent meetings with Senate President Drilon and other lawmakers went well. President Arroyo continues to push the Philippine Senate very hard for passage of anti-terrorism legislation. Romulo suggested the Embassy continue to lobby quietly its Senate contacts to pass the bill.

¶16. (C) Romulo said he would like to discuss all these issues with Secretary Rice and could fly to Washington at any time convenient to the Secretary. Ambassador noted that scheduling a face-to-face meeting could prove difficult, and offered to pass this information to the Secretary for him. Romulo then suggested he could brief the Secretary telephonically prior to his May 28 meetings with the Non-Aligned Movement. Romulo noted he could call at anytime convenient to the Secretary's schedule, including weekends, and said he knew her busy schedule would only allow a short call.

¶17. (C) Comment: We see a short telephone conversation between the Secretary and Romulo as useful in keeping the GRP

focused on key U.S. interests, including Burma and counterterrorism. Romulo speaks excellent English.

¶8. (C) Action Request: Please advise whether a telephone conversation between Secretary Romulo and Secretary Rice is possible and what date/time would be appropriate.

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Kenney